Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Please amend claims 25 and 26.

1. (Canceled).

2. (Canceled).

3. (Previously Presented) A device according to claim 25, where the segmented surface comprises two or more segments.

4. (Previously Presented) A device according to claim 25, where the segmented surface comprises three or more segments.

5. (Canceled).

6. (Canceled).

7. (Previously Presented) A device according to claim 25, wherein the dilating tip is generally funnel-shaped.

8. (Canceled).

9. (Previously Presented) A device according to claim 25, wherein the generally rigid tube of the dilating tip has a length ranging from about 2 mm to about 6 mm.

10. (Previously Presented) A device according to claim 25, wherein the generally rigid tube of the dilating tip has a length ranging from about 3 mm to about 5 mm.

11. (Previously Presented) A device according to claim 25, wherein the generally rigid tube of the dilating tip has an outer diameter ranging from about 0.6 mm to about 1 mm.

12. (Previously Presented) A device according to claim 25, wherein the generally rigid tube of the dilating tip has an outer diameter ranging from about 0.7 mm to about 0.8 mm.

13. (Previously Presented) A device according to claim 25, wherein the dilating tip comprises nitinol.

14. (Previously Presented) A device according to claim 25, further comprising a wire extending proximally from the dilating tip to near the proximal end of the tubular body to effect proximal movement of the dilating tip relative to the tubular body.

15. (Original) A device according to claim 14, further comprising a slidable member on the proximal end of the tubular body, the slidable member being connected to the wire so that proximal movement of the slidable member pulls the wire and causes proximal movement of the dilating tip relative to the tubular body.

16. (Previously Presented) A device according to claim 15, further comprising a latch for maintaining the position of the slidable member relative to the tubular body when the dilating tip is in the open configuration.

17. (Previously Presented) A device according to claim 25, further comprising a pressure valve at or near the proximal end of the tubular body.

18. (Canceled).

19. (Previously Presented) A device according to claim 26, wherein the slidable member is connected to the ring of the dilating tip by a wire having a distal end attached to the ring of the dilating tip and a proximal end attached to the slidable member;
wherein proximal movement of the slidable member pulls the wire and causes proximal movement of the dilating tip relative to the tubular body.

20. (Canceled).

21. (Canceled).

22. (Canceled).

23. (Previously Presented) A device according to claim 26, further comprising a latch for maintaining the position of the slidable member relative to the tubular body when the dilating tip is in the open configuration.

24. (Previously Presented) A device according to claim 26, further comprising a pressure valve at or near the proximal end of the tubular body.

25. (Currently Amended) A device comprising:
an elongated, generally flexible tubular body; and
a dilating tip slidably mounted on a distal end of the tubular body and comprising:
a segmented surface comprising a plurality of segments having proximal and distal ends, wherein the plurality of segments is configured to move between a closed configuration in which the segments combine to form the segmented surface and an open configuration in which the segments separate from one another;

a plurality of generally rigid tube segments, each tube segment extending distally from a segment of the segmented surface, and wherein, when the plurality of generally rigid tube segments is in the closed configuration, the plurality of generally rigid tube segments combine to form a generally rigid tube having a sharp distal end configured to puncture tissue, and when the segments of the segmented surface are in the open configuration, the generally rigid tube segments are separate from each other; and

a ring slidably mounted to the tubular body, wherein the distal ends of the segments of the segmented surface are hingedly attached to the ring;

wherein proximal movement of the ring relative to the tubular body exerts a force on the segmented surface to thereby open the segmented surface.

26. (Currently Amended) A device comprising:

an elongated, generally flexible tubular body;

a dilating tip slidably mounted on a distal end of the tubular body and comprising:

a ring mounted in surrounding relation to the distal end of the tubular body;

a segmented surface comprising three or more segments, each segment being hingedly attached to the ring, wherein the three or more segments are configured to move between a closed configuration in which the segments combine to form the segmented surface and an open configuration in which the segments separate from one another; and

three or more generally rigid tube segments, each tube segment extending distally from one of the three or more segments of the segmented surface, wherein when the three or more generally rigid tube segments are in the closed configuration, the three or more generally rigid tube segments combine to form a generally rigid tube having a sharp distal end configured to puncture tissue, and when the segments of the segmented surface are in the open configuration, the generally rigid tube segments are separate from each other;

a slidable member connected to the ring of the dilating tip, wherein proximal movement of the slidable member relative to the tubular body exerts a force on the segmented surface and the generally rigid tube to thereby open the segmented surface and the generally rigid tube.